



NATIONAL
PARKS
OF
BELGIAN
CONGO



PHOTO E. HOBERT

DU LA PART

DE L'INSTITUT DES PARCS NATIONAUX
DU CONGO BELGE

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PARKS CONGO

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I. THE OBJECTS OF THE INSTITUTE

THE idea of the preservation of scenery, flora, and fauna, in their natural state, which in itself is not at all new, is based in varying degrees on two main objectives.

As a secondary consideration, care is devoted to the preservation of natural beauties from modern constructions, mostly far from attractive in appearance, such as factories and advertisement hoardings.

The main object, however, is to prevent man, whose means of transport and weapons of destruction increase in proportion to scientific progress, from breaking up for his own temporary benefit the equilibrium of the three kingdoms of nature.

The animal kingdom suffers in two ways from human indifference: directly, as the result of slaughter; indirectly, by the destruction of its environment, so indispensable to its existence. In the majority of civilised countries, man now regrets having squandered his natural resources to such an extent that game figures only very meagerly in present-day fare.

As an example of the destruction of natural vegetation, turn to those places once wooded, now desert or barren spaces, as the result of indiscriminate timber cutting.

The appearance of the land itself has even been changed as a result of man's interference. One example will suffice: the floods which have occurred in France, the United States and the Dutch Indies caused by the sudden silting up of river beds. This silting was the direct result of huge quantities of earth being washed down from upstream; the earth was washed away from the sides of valleys, where formerly the roots of trees and other vegetation, now destroyed, bound the soil and sub-strata firmly together against the erosive action of rain-water.

For half a century or more, the reaction against such methods has been general. Wild animals are everywhere protected by the legislative control of hunting and the creation of special reserves. The preservation of forests, legislative control of the clearing of ground, and schemes for re-planting have similar aims in view for the preservation of the vegetal kingdom.

The definite idea of the creation of National Parks first came into being in the United States in 1872, on the occasion of the opening of Yellowstone National Park.

This point requires certain developments, to explain the origin of the name and to clarify its meaning, which can still be interpreted in various ways according to different countries where it is used.

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The English version was made with the assistance of N. Campbell and I. M. Rivers.

Rwindi Camp,
Wgntal's territory.
(Photo J.-P. Harroy).



II. The term « strict natural reserve » shall denote an area placed under public control, throughout which any form of hunting or fishing, any undertakings connected with forestry, agriculture, or mining, any excavations or prospecting, drilling, levelling of the ground, or construction, any work involving the alteration of the configuration of the soil or the character of the vegetation, any act likely to harm or disturb the fauna or flora, and the introduction of any species of fauna and flora, whether indigenous or imported, wild or domesticated, shall be strictly forbidden; which it will be forbidden to enter, traverse, or camp in without a special written permit from the competent authorities; and in which scientific investigations may only be undertaken by permission of those authorities.

It is clearly shown that the « strict natural reserve » is subject to regulations considerably more severe than those applied to the « National Park ». It is also to be noted that the National Parks in the Belgian Congo, in which only parts of the sections are open to the public, are theoretically closer allied to the « natural reserves » than to « National Parks » as defined by the London Convention.

King Albert, who allowed his name to be given to the first of the National Parks in the Belgian Congo, promoted and developed this idea of National Parks for the Belgian Congo.

Thanks to his good offices and the support of King Leopold III, who, as Duke of Brabant, was for several years President of the « Parc National Albert » Institute, the Belgian Congo to-day possesses a number of National Parks, subject to very rational legislation.

2. Sake straits. - Recent lava from Rumukwa volcano, with new vegetation. (Photo G.-F. de Witte).

The words « National Park » have been adopted direct from America, where the word « Park » refers to a stretch of country, comprising some particularly remarkable natural beauties to be preserved intact for the pleasure of man; the adjective « National » makes it clear that the project concerns the whole nation.

The Conference for the Protection of the Fauna and Flora in Africa, which met in London in 1955, adopted a definition of the words « National Park » :

For the purposes of the present Convention :

1. The expression « National Park » shall denote an area (a) placed under public control, the boundaries of which shall not be altered or any portion be capable of alienation except by the competent legislative authorities, (b) set aside for the propagation, protection and preservation of wild animal life and wild vegetation, and for the preservation of objects of aesthetic, geological, prehistoric, historical, archaeological, or other scientific interest, for the benefit, advantage and enjoyment of the general public, (c) in which the hunting, killing or capturing of fauna and the destruction or collection of flora is prohibited except by or under the direction or control of the park authorities.

In accordance with the above provisions, facilities shall, as far as possible, be given to the general public for observing the fauna and flora in National Parks.

The following is the definition approved by the same Conference in the « natural reserve »



In the speech delivered in London, in November 1935, a speech which constitutes the charter of the « Institut des Parcs Nationaux du Congo Belge », King Leopold III, then Duke of Brabant, defined in detail the three main objectives of the Institute.

These aims, which were incorporated in the decree of November 26th, 1934, can be given, in general outline, as follows:

1.) Preservation of a biological nucleus in its primitive state, by the elimination of all human influence. This object necessitated the development of new regulations and a strict supervision.

2.) Scientific study, based on a general plan, of the National Parks. This aspect of the Institute's programme, which raises it to a very special level, has already been put into operation and has been greatly stimulated by the interest of a generous patron. A large donation subsidised the creation of the « Fondation pour favoriser l'Etude scientifique des Parcs Nationaux du Congo Belge », and this body can now send to the Belgian Congo every year one or two scientific missions to pursue definite programmes.

The first of these groups was sent out in 1935, thanks to the support given by the « Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique », and a detailed inventory of the fauna and flora of the « Parc National Albert » was made.

Important collections and data were gathered and carefully examined, and specialists reports are now being published.

The Institute has pursued its programme by sending groups of specialists to the « Parc National Albert » to examine questions of lacustrine evolution, magnetic influence, botanic sociology, mammalogy and vulcanology. A special and purely scientific film, intended to depict the characteristic flora and natural habits of the fauna of the National Parks, was also made under the auspices of the Institute.

3.) Third aim of the Institute : as far as compatible with the principles of preservation and scientific study, the development of touring in the National Parks is to be encouraged.

The restrictions quoted previously from the speech of the Duke of Brabant and the text of the constitutional decree of the Institute permit the Institute to open to visitors only a portion of the territories under its jurisdiction. In certain cases the passage of man has had to be prohibited, in order to permit the fauna to settle down unmolested in its primitive surroundings and to ensure its propagation. In other cases it has been necessary to reduce the human element, so that the natural growth of vegetation is not interfered with (*Photo 2*). With these exceptions, however, it has been found possible to open to tourists a number of footpaths and roads for cars so that visitors can, at their leisure, come into close contact with the natural beauties of such astonishing variety that nature seems to have piled with prodigal hands into the relatively small area of the « Parc National Albert ».

II. HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

AS early as 1889 King Leopold II had created special game reserves in the Congo Free State for the protection of elephants from ruthless destruction.

In 1909, on his return from a voyage to the Colony, Prince Albert of Belgium emphasised the necessity for the creation in the Belgian Congo of natural reserves, destined to ensure the preservation of certain animal and vegetable species threatened with extinction.

After his visit, as King Albert, to the United States in 1919 he took up the same suggestion, but with the additional idea of a National Park, regulated in accordance with equatorial conditions.

General opinion became favourable to this idea during the years just after the War, principally as a result of the intervention of Baron E. Cartier de Marchienne, then Belgian Ambassador to the United States. After an expedition to the Kivu conducted by the American naturalist, Carl Akeley, had returned, a first decree was issued, creating in 1925 the « Parc National Albert ». This was at first a reserve of very small area, mainly intended for the protection of the last of the

5. The « Parc National Albert » in 1925. - Visoke, Karisimbi, and Mikero. (Photo G.-F. de Witte).



gorillas, living near the peaks of the extinct volcanoes, Mikeno, Karisimbi and Visoke (Photo 5).

Another expedition, during which Akeley lost his life (Photo 4), explored the district between Lakes Kivu and Edward and brought back sufficient information to permit in 1929 of a considerable extension of the small reserve of 1925.

Then appeared, in the decree of July 9th 1929, the important principle which decided the independent character of the « Institut des Parcs Nationaux du Congo Belge ».

The Administration of the territories thus set aside as natural reserves was confided to an autonomous organisation « Parc National Albert », with its own civil rights and directed by an Administrative Commission and a managing Committee, responsible only to the Minister for the Colonies.

The institution thus constituted was endowed, thanks to its rational charter, with the freedom of action indispensable for carrying out a far-sighted policy.

There was another great innovation: The Administrative Commission of the « Parc National Albert » consisting of sixteen Belgians, had also eight foreign members, all people of international standing and particularly interested in the problems of the protection of nature.

On this Commission six countries are represented: England, the United States, France, Holland, Italy and Sweden.

From 1930 to 1954, at the instigation of its President, H.R.H. the

Duke of Brabant, the Institute arranged its organisation in Africa, settled its administrative policy, and commenced on its first programme for the scientific exploration of the wonderful domain of the National Park.

The results of the studies carried out were, in November 1954, the creation in Ruanda of a new Park, the « Parc National de la Kagera » and a further extension of the « Parc National Albert » the sections of which, since then, have come to constitute a continuous band between Lake Kivu and Lake Edward.

The creation of the « Parc National de la Kagera » justified the change in title of the Institute. The « Parc National Albert » became the « Institut des Parcs Nationaux du Congo Belge ».

This new decree, dated November 25th 1954, was intended to revise the statute of the Institute, as a result of the practical experience gained during the first five years of activity.

The following year another decree, dated November 12th 1955, incorporated in the « Parc National Albert » the Belgian waters of Lake Edward (Photo 5), the plains of the upper and middle Semliki and the western slopes of the Ruwenzori Range, thus increasing the total area of this Park to nearly a million hectares (approximately two and a half million acres).

Finally, on March 17th 1958, the « Parc National de la Garamba » was created by special decree, on the borders of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, between the rivers Aka and Dungu and close to the Elephant training Station at Gangala-na-Bodio.



1. Kahura (Mikeno-Karisimbi,
2. von W.
3. Col. Akeley's tomb
4. (to the right) Mounts Hogen-Hou
(Photo J.P. Harrow)



5. Kamande,
Lake Edward
(Photo J.P. Harrow).

III. Local

Organisation



7. « Parc National de la Kagera » - Savanna. - (Photo. I.P.)

THE administration in Africa of the National Parks is delegated to one or more Commissioners.

« Parc National Albert », the most important in view of its size, position, touristic interest and variety of animal and vegetable species, is divided into two zones, one under the authority of a Commissioner domiciled at Rutszuru and the other under a Commissioner living at Muhsora on the western slopes of Ruwenzori.

In the « Parcs Nationaux de la Garamba et de la Kagera », administration of the former is carried out by the Manager of the Elephant-training Station at Gangala-na-Bodio, and control of the latter is in the hands of a member of the Territorial Administration of Ruanda. The territories set apart as reserves have been chosen in such a way that practically no ground suitable for colonisation is included in the area covered by the National Parks. The rugged chain of active and extinct volcanoes (Photo 6), the plain of comparatively recent lava, the barren and fly-ridden plains of Rwandi-Rutszuru and of the upper and middle Semliki, are all as unsuited for habitation by colonists or natives as the steep slopes and snowclad summits of Ruwenzori. The same is true of the Garamba savannas and the barren hills (Photo 7) or swampy reaches of the « Parc National de la Kagera ». As regards the native population, this has been reduced to a minimum. To enable the Institute to ensure effective preservation, it has been found necessary in certain cases to move native inhabitants to beyond the zones of strict reserve. These transfers have been effected either permanently after the purchase of the native rights in accordance with the laws in force, or temporarily, under the evacuation provisions established to assist the fight against sleeping sickness. The sections of the National Parks are divided into subsections for supervision, for which purpose native keepers are employed. These latter are often aided by pygmy assistants. The activities of these keepers are controlled and supervised by the Commissioners.

IV. THE "PARC NATIONAL ALBERT"

A. GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION

EVERYONE can conjure up a picture of the great «Albertine Rift», that huge trench, marked by the series of great African lakes and stretching along the eastern borders of the Belgian Congo. It has an average width of 50 kilometres (appr. 30 miles) and is several thousands of kilometres long, bounded on the east and west by an escarpment rising in places over 1,000 metres (3,300 feet) (Photo 8). To the north of Lake Kivu it is closed in by the volcanic chain of Virunga or Mufumbiro.

This geological accident, of relatively recent date, has formed the watershed between the basins of the Nile and the Congo.

The «Parc National Albert» is situated at the bottom of this «Rift» between Lake Kivu to the south and the first degree of Latitude North, covering a length of about 500 kilometres (300 miles). To the east and west it is literally walled in by the scars of the «Rifts», which are so high and precipitous that they act as a serious barrier to botanical or zoological migration. Its geographical position, therefore, makes it ideal for the purpose for which it is intended, a centre for biological study immune from outside influence.

For administrative purposes the «Parc National Albert» is subdivided into seven sections, each bearing the name of a notable geographic feature and each offering a distinct geological, botanical, and zoological aspect. These sections, from South to North, are known as Mikeno, Nyamuragira, Rwindi-Rutshuru, Lake Edward, Upper Semliki, Middle Semliki and Ruwenzori.

a. THE MIKENO SECTION.

To the east of the Goma-Rutshuru road, on the borders of Uganda, touching the Congo-Ruanda frontier, this section includes the slopes situated in Belgian territory of the six extinct volcanoes : Mikeno 4,457 m. (appr. 14,600 f.), Karisimbi 4,507 m. (appr. 14,800 f.), Visoke 5,711 m. (appr. 12,200 f.), Sabinyo 5,501 m. (appr. 11,500 f.), Galinga 5,475 m. (appr. 11,400 f.). Muhavura 4,127 m. (appr. 13,600 f.).

These volcanoes, extinct for many centuries, show traces of deep erosion but are now densely covered with recent vegetation.

The altitudes of these volcanoes and their close proximity to the Equator subject this vegetation to very unusual climatic conditions, thus accounting for the strange types of flora to be found at the higher levels. Around 2,600 m. (8,500 f.) the vegetation found at the lower altitudes (Photo 9) gives place to a zone of bamboo (Photo 15), some of which are exceptionally large.

Toward 5,000 m. (16,000 f.) hagenias flourish (Photos 4 and 6). These are the last signs of the forest proper. Here amid typical under-growth with wild celery live the gorillas, for whose protection the first measures were taken.



1. Kivuvallei (Plain of Lake Kivu) - Tropische regenwoud (Tropical rain forest). (Photo W. H. White)



2. Ishamugusa (Northern slope of Visoke, 2,250 m.). - Grotte. Ferns and汉斯. (Photo G.-F. de Witte).

"Then the climber passes through different stages of vegetation: hypericum, tree heather, senecios and lobelias, which are the last conspicuous plants at these altitudes (Photos 10, 11, 12).

Still higher, towards 4,000 m. (appr. 13,000 f.), carex, immortelles and alchemilla, blending with the last of the senecios and lobelias, give the scenery a prehistoric appearance. Finally, towards the peaks, there is no vegetation except lichen and moss.

A great variety of the larger animals is to be found on these slopes, although the altitude would normally be considered too high for them. At nearly 4,000 m. (13,000 f.), elephant, buffalo, leopard, and even lion have been seen, when the dry season causes a shortage of water at the lower levels (Photo 14).

This region, difficult of access, is closed to tourists and visitors for reasons already explained, although the natural vegetation [flourishing there makes it one of the most picturesque parts of the « Parc National Albert ». Visitors who wish to admire similar fairy-like scenery can do so on the slopes of Ruwenzori.

10. Muhavura (photo taken near the summit, 4,117 m.)
Lobelia.

(Photo G. F. de Witte).



10. Muhavura (photo taken near the summit, 4,117 m.)
Lobelia.

(Photo G. F. de Witte).



11. Crater-lake of Visoke.
Lobelia and *Senecio*.
(Photo G.-F. de Witte).

12. Rakuru. *Senecio*
carpet of *Athemis*.
(Photo R. Horer).



13. Kusimba
slope (3,000 m.).
Buffalo killed by lion.
(Photo J.P. Harvey).



IV. THE NYAMURAGIRA SECTION.

In the west of the Mikeno chain lies the section comprising the three volcanoes, the chief of which are Nyamuragira, 3,035 m. (appr. 10,000 f.), and Nyiragongo, 5,470 m. (appr. 11,400 f.).

A third centre of volcanic activity, at a lower altitude and less impressive in appearance, is formed by the small volcano Rumoka (*Rumoko* 21) situated close to Lake Kivu, to the north of the Katerzi plateau. The eruption which took place here in 1912 almost changed Lake Kivu into a land-locked lake (Photo 17).

This section, about 50 kilometres (19 miles) long, consists entirely of streams of lava, old and comparatively recent, on which growths of typical vegetation can be seen in all their stages of development (*Rumoko* 18). The juxtaposition here of lava-flows of different yet well defined periods allows the botanist to study the development and spread of vegetation over a one-time barren region.

In the immediate vicinity of Rumoka, the lava from the 1912 eruption is already covered with a considerable amount of vegetation. This appears to have but a distant relation to the magnificent forest covering the plain of lava, from which emerge the summits of Nyiragongo and Nyumviragira.

The trees in this forest, which include mahogany of considerable

width, grow on roots widely spread out like a huge grid, for ten inches



5. Rwenz (Northern slope of Karisimbi, 2,800 m.).
Rambutan
(Photo J.-P. Harvey)

below the surface the soil gives place to layers of hard lava through which no roots can penetrate.

The hold of the roots of the trees in this forest being thus very weak, the trees often fall as a result of high winds and tornadoes or the passage of the herds of elephants which roam these woods.

There are heath-trees to be found higher up on Nyamuragira, these are shorter than those on Mikeno; and there are also lobelias, immortelles, and hypericum.

Nyiragongo, although only a little higher, is much more picturesque and closely resembles, in its flora, the volcanoes of the eastern chain. Of special interest is a crater known as Shabern, where bamboo and



15. Nyamuragira.
The crater, by night,
before the eruption of 1938
(Photo J.-P. Harroy).

16. Nyamuragira.
The new crater,
eruption of January 1938.
(Photo R. Hinter).



17. Sake straits.
Lava from Rumoka volcano
(eruption 1912) on the
shore of Lake Kivu.
(Photo G.-E. de Witte).

18. Bilba (Eastern slope
of Nyamuragira).
Vegetation on lava plain.
(Photo J.-P. Harroy).

hagenia flourish, and on the bottom of the crater, hypericum, senecio, lobelias and carex, thus reproducing at 2,800 m. (app. 9,200 f.) the general aspect of Rukumi (Karisimbi), situated 1,000 m. (app. 3,500 f.) higher.

The bottom of the crater of Nyiragongo is difficult of access. With sides almost as steep and vertical as a chimney's, it measures 2 kilometres (app. 1. 1/5 mile) across and is 250 m. (app. 800 f.) deep (photo 20), and in the horizontal platform at the bottom of this crater there is another chimney, quite vertical and several hundred yards in diameter, going down into the bowels of the earth and still in activity.

The climb up the volcano via the Shabern crater is very precipitous

19. Nyamuragira. - Panorama of crater. - (Photo E.-J.-B. Verleyen).



indeed, and the edge of the great crater can be reached, without undue fatigue, in two days. The fumes and the constant variations in the direction of the winds unfortunately often spoil the view.

Early in 1958, the crater of Nyamuragira (photo 19) was still an exceptionally attractive spot for tourists. Huts have been built for the benefit of climbers at Mushumangabo, on the eastern side of the mountain, and in the crater itself. It is easy to penetrate down into the crater; and there was no risk whatever in approaching the active area where open chimneys and holes presented, especially in the evening, a real picture of inferno (photo 15).

At the end of January 1958 (the crater having for months given evidence of increasing activity) a further eruption opened a new outlet on the southwestern slope, outside the crater proper. A huge stream of lava spread towards the south (photo 16), threatening to cut off the Goma-Sake road. The opening of this new outlet, however, brought to a stop the usual activity of the central crater; and at the time of writing, a specialist sent out by the « Institut des Parcs Nationaux du Congo Belge » to study the phases of this eruption states that he cannot yet decide whether the shifting of the centre of activity is permanent or not.

20. Nyiragongo.
Crater.
(Photo J. P. Harry).



21. Rumokha.
Inside of the second crater.
(Photo G. F. de Witte).

25. The hot springs
of Mayya-Moto.
(Photo J.-P. Harroy).



22. Rwindi-Rutshuru plain. - *Euphorbia*, Lion. - (Photo L. Lippens).



23. Rwindi-Rutshuru plain.
Camping by night.
(Photo J.-P. Harroy).

c. THE RWINDI-RUTSHURU SECTION

This section, commonly known as « The Plain », stretches to the east up to the frontier of Uganda, and to the west rises to a mountainous wall with altitudes reaching 2,000 metres (appr. 6,500 feet).

Certain volcanic features resemble those of the previous section. 50 kilometres (appr. 30 miles) to the north of Rutshuru and very close to the main road toward Beni, the series of seven hot springs at May-ya-Moto (photo 25), most of which are actually boiling, are such an extraordinary sight that they well merit the little extra time required for a visit (photo 26).

This section is partially open to tourists and is particularly noteworthy for the abundance of animal life. Large herds of antelope and

26. May-ya-Moto. - *Rutshuru River and swamps near the hot springs, Mount Kasadi*.
(Photo G.-F. de Witte).



buffalo (photo 27), also elephants and carnivorous animals are to be found amidst the growth of euphorbia (photo 22) and thorn-bush.

The recent alluvial formation of this plain explains the intensive evolution of the vegetation, which is actually passing from open grassland to dense bush and savanna (photo 31). This change in vegetation is rendering the district less and less suitable as a natural abode for antelope, making difficult their escape from their carnivorous enemies, so

lope, making difficult their escape from their carnivorous enemies, so they are gradually decreasing in number.

The elephants and buffalo, for which a more wooded habitat (photo 30) is quite suitable, are multiplying greatly. And the carnivorous animals, lions, leopards, jackals, hunting dogs, are not failing to take advantage of this change and are fast increasing in numbers at the expense of the antelope, cobs and topi.

The policy of the Institute, forbidding bush fires systematically lighted by man, has been blamed as the cause of this decrease in the herds of antelope. Recent research has however, proved that the suppression of man-made fires does not prevent the bush being burnt at least once every three years by natural fires, usually started by lightning. It has further been shown that these fires do little to prevent or hinder the evolution of the vegetation on this plain.

In these circumstances the decrease in the number of antelope, to the benefit of other species, must be regarded as a natural phenomenon,

and even the renewal of bush fires would be incapable of arresting its evolution.

27. Rwind-Rutshuru plain. - Buffaloes. - (Photo 1. Lipperus).



28. Ishaishi plain (on the Uganda border). - Elands born > euphorbia (Photo R. Hoier).





51. Rwindi-Rutshuru plain. - On the left, open plain inhabited by antelopes Cobus. On the right, thorny bush, one of the stages in evolution of the vegetation. (Photo L. Lippens).



50. Kamande. - Thorny bush. Waterback. - (Photo L. Lippens).



55. Kamande (Lake Edward). Elephants bathing. (Photo L. Lippens)



52. Butchumba (Lake Edward) Bird colony. (Photo L. Lippens).

d. THE LAKE EDWARD SECTION.

This section comprises the Belgian waters of the lake and a narrow strip along the western banks.

Lake Edward, especially since it has been a reserve, shelters far more wild life than almost any water in the world (photo 53). On its banks are thousands of hippopotami and the aquatic vegetation harbours innumerable colonies of the most varied species of birds (photo 32). The waters of the lake are well stocked with a profusion of different varieties of fish. The shores, which were infected with sleeping sickness, were evacuated several years ago on medical advice.

This section includes, to the northwest of the lake, the Tshiberimt range, with an altitude of over 5,000 m. (10,000 f.), which is covered with very varied types of vegetation and is the home of a race of gorillas probably unknown in the other forests of the « Parc National Albert ».

e. THE UPPER SEMLIKI SECTION.

This section, which is on the Equator, runs from the northern shore of Lake Edward to the Beni-Kasindi road. It is a plain covered with euphorbia and horasius palms (*photo 35*). traversed by the forests which border the banks of the winding course of the Semliki river. This river which carries the waters of Lake Edward to Lake Albert, has its source at Ishango (*photo 34*), in a particularly picturesque spot, accessible to visitors.

From one of the cliffs, may be seen a wonderful panorama of the lake and the wild life which abounds there. Here elephant and buffalo are numerous, but the antelopes have practically disappeared. Before being made a Reserve and then a National Park, this plain of the upper Semliki had been turned into a slaughterhouse by Europeans and natives alike, so that few antelope were left. But total extinction has fortunately been avoided in time and now a few herds are gathering again.



*34. Ishango.
The Semliki river flowing
out of Lake Edward.
(Photo J.-P. Harrody.)*



*35. Upper Semliki plain
between Beni-Kasindi
(Photo J.-P. Harrody)*

f. THE MIDDLE SEMLIKI SECTION.

Between the Beni-Katwe road and the northern boundaries of the Park, this section comprises a typical example of equatorial forest (*photo 36*).

It is well irrigated by the Semliki itself and by its numerous tributaries, which pour down from the slopes of Ruwenzori, carrying quantities of water of glacial origin.

This forest is so dense that it is difficult to penetrate. A few tribes of pygmies still live there, unaffected by any European influence. A number of specially trained pygmies were recently engaged by the Commissioner stationed at Mutsora with a view to obtaining an approximate census of the okapis there. The okapi is, in fact, threatened with extinction, as it is an object of prey to the natives who covet it not only on account of its palatable meat, but for its valuable skin.

As the natural abode of the okapi is practically inaccessible to Europeans, its protection is as difficult as it is necessary. The census recently carried out in this portion of the «Parc National Albert» showed, fortunately, a figure somewhat higher than those interested had dared to hope.



36. Batahu. - Equatorial forest. - (Photo J.-P. Harrody.)





57. Butabu valley
Treéfonds
(Photo J.-P. Harroy).



58. Ruwenzori
(Camp of the Bottles,
1,300 Metres),
Health trees
(Photo J.-P. Harroy).



Apart from the okapi, elephant, buffalo, and many varieties of monkeys live in the dense and humid undergrowth, a veritable bothouse where myriads of tiny organisms pursue their task of organic disintegration.

3. THE RUWENZORI SECTION.

Only an imaginary line, without biological significance, can be found to mark the western boundaries of this section.

Apart from the 1,500 metres (5,000 feet) level, there are no fixed zones to mark the different stages of vegetation which pass from the great equatorial forest at the foot to alpine flora at the summit.

This gradual change from one species to another is one of the most interesting aspects for all naturalists visiting the «Parc National Albert»; there are few spots in the world which comprise every type of vegetation from the most dense equatorial growth to stunted moss and lichen at glacier level.

After the lower mountain forest (photo 37) come bamboos and a few clusters of hagenias. Then between 2,500 m. (8,200 f.) and 3,000 m. (10,000 f.) there are lichen-draped heath-trees (photos 38), with colourful mosses, sometimes as much as a metre (over 3 f.) in depth. The whole appearance of this region is fairylike, with the tortured shapes of the tree trunks, their tresses of lichen, and the vivid colours of the moss.

Higher up, there are senecio, hypericum, lobelia, everlasting flowers, and alchemilla, which remind one of the scenery in the Mikero section. The ascent of the mountain by the belgian slopes is generally made



58. Ruwenzori
(Camp of the Bottles,
1,300 Metres),
Health trees
(Photo J.-P. Harroy).



40. Ruwenzori (Camp des Petres),
Moss, Heath trees,
(Photo J.-P. Harroy).

This itinerary, which was adopted by the Belgian Ruwenzori expedition in 1952, leads through the village of Kalonge and over the ridge of Mohangu (photo 39), to the famous « Camp of the Bottles » (photo 38) which overlooks Black Lake. On leaving this camp, where the climatic conditions (photo 41) make existence difficult for natives as well as Europeans, the glaciers (photo 42) can be reached in a few comparatively easy stages. An approach can be made to the White and Grey Lakes, and also to the famous Green Lake (photo 43), where the strange colour of the waters and the weird shapes of the vegetation produce one of the most extraordinary and imposing sights to be seen anywhere in the world.

To reach the summit proper of the chain, Margherita Peak (5,119 m. appr. 16,800 f.), an alpinist's equipment and experience are necessary; and only a few experts dare attempt the final ascent. There is a fascinating description of the difficulties of this climb in the splendid book published by the 1952 Ruwenzori Expedition under the auspices of the « Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique ». (*)

(*) « RUWENZORI » - Edition R. Dupiez - Bruxelles.

42. Ruwenzori
Snow, Glacier, Ice, crystal.
(by H. J. Broek)



43. Ruwenzori. - The Green Lake. - (Photo H. J. Broek).





44. Kibali.
Chief Kafembe's pygmies.
(Photo J.-P. Harrov).

the Walutsi tribes, a people of Nilotic origin, very tall and of a lively intelligence. And at Rutshuru the visitor can hear the drummers of Chief N'deze perform. With the permission and assistance of the Territorial Administrator, near Beni, it is also possible to meet some pygmy groups.

B. ETHNOLOGY

It has already been said that, as far as possible, the native population has been transferred outside the boundaries of the National Parks.

An exception, however, had to be made in favour of the pygmies, little huntsmen, who almost form part of the natural fauna. In their natural surroundings in the Mikeno, Nyamuragira and Middle Semliki sections, a few tribes of Baitwa are still hunting and living their normal lives. The Institute employs a certain number of them as auxiliary keepers, thus teaching them to help in the protection of their native surroundings, which are essential for their existence and welfare.

In the Kibati region, southeast of Nyiragongo, it is possible to meet some of these quaint people (photo 44) through Chief Kahembe. A gift of a few pounds of salt or a few pots of beer will effect an introduction to the tribes and their ceremonial dances and songs. These, when given in the evening by the campfire, are an unforgettable spectacle for the tourist, and appeal to his artistic emotion.

There are very few Bantus settled in the Park. At certain places on the main roads, it has been found necessary to preserve some villages to furnish the labour for keeping the roads in order. As these villages are easy of access, there is no difficulty in keeping them under supervision, and the natives have lost their custom of pursuing and killing game.

The animals, now that few are left from the generations which were hunted and killed by men, live in quiet proximity to the villages and are gradually losing all fear, showing themselves quite indifferent to the presence of man. Take, for example, the village of Kalanda, where two buffaloes were seen to pass peacefully and in broad daylight through the village without causing the slightest disturbance. Along the borders of the National Parks there are some native settlements which are worthy of note. In Rumundu, close to the Mikeno section there are the first of

C. TOURING.

In some sections visitors are forbidden to enter, in order to ensure the protection and propagation of certain types of animals, such as the gorilla, and the preservation of vegetation marking the stages of evolution of the new growths covering the recent lava. For other reasons, certain regions are closed to tourists, because of the dangers of navigation on Lake Edward and the impenetrable nature of the great Semliki forest.

In the mountainous Nyamuragira and Ruwenzori sections and on the plains of Rwindi-Rutshuru and the upper Semliki, special arrangements have been made to permit tourists to visit this wonderful country and observe its fauna and its varied landscapes. Arrangements can be made for parties wishing to make the ascent to the craters of Nyiragongo and Nyamuragira.

On Ruwenzori there is a track leading to the « Camp of the Bottles », and, if required, trained bearers and guides can be engaged to conduct the tourist to the glacier levels.

On the plains where game abounds, travelling is possible by car: the level ground lends itself to this comfortable and speedy means of transport. Travelling by car has another great advantage: it rarely frightens the animals, who are more afraid of the scent than of the sight of man. Provided the regulations of keeping to the roads and of not

45. Camping. - (Photo G.F. de Witte).



hunting game are adhered to, the animals regard cars, which smell only of petrol, with complete indifference.

In the Rwindi-Rutshuru section a 25 kilometre (appr. 15 miles) track parallels the escarpment from the main road to Kamande Bay (photo 48). Farther to the east a special circular road branches off from the Beni-Rutshuru road, near Katanda, running through Bitshumbi and Nyamushengero and close to the Rutshuru River. This road covers some 70 kilometres (appr. 45 miles) and passes through a region abounding in wild life.

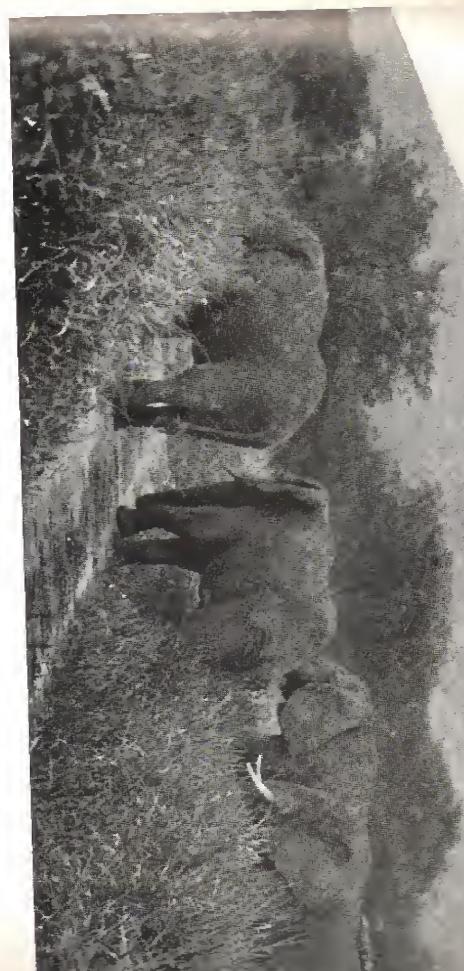
On the banks of the Rwindi there is a tourist camp for the special benefit of visitors, so that several days and nights may be spent in the



46. Kabasita escarpment.
The road and Mount Lubere.
(Photo G. F. de Witte).



47. Idaho Mountains
(or Queen Lake) to the
north of Lake Edward
outside the boundaries
of the National
Allied
Vale
of
Winni



48. On the automobile track to Kamande. - (Photo L. Lippens).

National Park. A delegate of the Institute organises excursions and is always ready to advise and help tourists.

In the Upper Semliki section there is a track for automobiles about 20 kilometres (appr. 12 miles) long from Kasindi to Ishango, at the outlet of the Semliki River from Lake Edward.



49. One of the
rest houses built by
the Institute.
(Photo L. P. Harvey)

50. « Parc National de la Kagera ».
Typical aspect of vegetation.
(Photo J.-P. Harry).



V. THE "PARC NATIONAL DE LA KAGERA",

THIS Park, created on November 20th 1954, is the only one where the articles of the constitutional decree of the Institute have been applied, which anticipate the sub-division of the National Parks into strict reserves and « territoires annexes ». In the strict reserves, any human penetration, even circulation, is forbidden. In the « territoires-annexes », only hunting, fishing and the felling of trees are prohibited, but exception is made in favour of natives living there, in so far as their daily needs are concerned.

The « Parc National de la Kagera », in north-eastern Rwanda, on the borders of Tanganyika Territory, consists of a strict reserve in the southeast, covering some 200,000 hectares (500,000 acres), and to the northwest of a « territoire-annexe » covering about half this area.

The greater portion of this Park is similar in appearance to the adjoining region of Ruanda, barren and arid, reminiscent of some parts of Sudan. Close to the Kagera River there are marshy swamps with a remarkable abundance of aquatic flora and fauna, the protection of which is unfortunately hindered by the presence in the Park itself of a large number of Banyambo fishermen. These it has so far been impossible to evacuate.

This National Park is of very great interest from the zoological point of view, as it contains a variety of species even more numerous than that of the « Parc National Albert ». Antelope, such as impala and oribi, and great herds of zebra largely compensate for the lack of the largest of land mammals, the elephant.

From the botanical and entomological points of view, this region to the east of the Congo-Nile watershed is of remarkable interest, as it does not belong with any of the natural areas of the Belgian Congo, which lies wholly to the west of the watershed.

Tourists may now visit the strict reserve, a special motor road having been built which bears off from the Kakutumba-Kigali main road

just north of Gahoro, and runs into the heart of the reserve, reaching the Mwita plain, at no distance from the Kagera. At some future date this road will curve to the south and lead across the Ntamusishi and Nyaruhuru plains to Kibungu, where the Park Administration is located.

VI. THE "PARC NATIONAL DE LA GARAMBA",

Recent creation, this National Park has taken the place of the one-time hunting reserve of Aka-Dungu, on the borders of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

It is hoped that this Park will be the means of protecting and preserving some groups of white rhinoceros, eland and giraffe. This strict reserve, which covers 500,000 hectares (1,250,000 acres), has the appearance of a grassy savanna (photo 51), with only gentle undulations. The grass, often over 2 metres (7 feet) high, cuts off the view and this region is of minor interest to the tourist. Therefore the institute does not yet propose making arrangements for visitors to this Park.

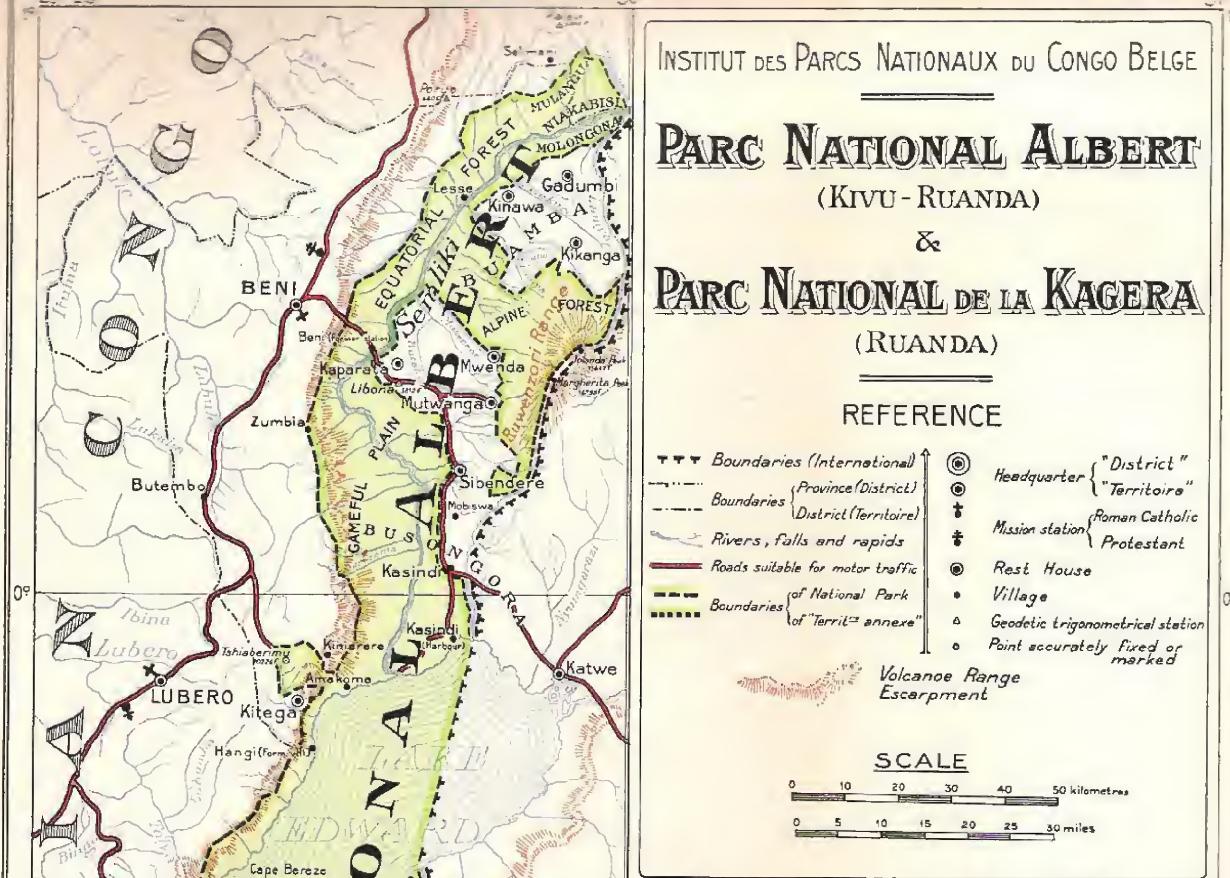
This new Park is under the supervision of the Director of the Elephant-training Station at Gangala-na-Bodie, situated on the southern border of the Park.

51. « Parc National de la Garamba ». - Typical vegetation. (Photo H. Haekens).



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INSTITUT DES PARCS NATIONAUX DU CONGO BELGE

PARC NATIONAL ALBERT
(KIVU - RUANDA)

PARC NATIONAL DE LA KAGERA
(RUANDA)

REFERENCE

Boundary (International)	Headquarter "District"
Boundary Province District	"Territoire"
District Territorial	Mission station Roman Catholic
Rivers, falls and rapids	Protestant
Roads suitable for motor traffic	Rest House
Boundaries of National Park	Village
Boundaries of Territ. annex	Geodetic trigonometrical station
Volcanoe Range Escarpment	Point accurately fixed or marked

SCALE

